

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

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June 17, 1969

MEMORANDUM FOR DR. KISSINGER

FROM: Laurence E. Lynn, Jr. ^{gyl}
Helmut Sonnenfeldt ^{gyl}

SUBJECT: June 18 NSC Meeting on U.S. Strategic Posture
and SALT

Enclosed are materials for you and the President to use at the June 18 NSC meeting.

The format is arranged so that the first part of the meeting is devoted to a discussion of strategic policy issues. Following this, Gerry Smith and Helms can give their briefings on SALT and U.S. verification capabilities as scheduled. However, all discussion of the substantive issues associated with preparing a U.S. position for SALT should be taken up at the next NSC meeting.

Lynn has revised the President's talking points, and added the summary report of the NSSM-28 SALT study to his book. All other materials in the book remain the same as they were for the last NSC meeting on NSSM-3.

The Memorandum for the President alerts him to the existence of the "Stop Where We Are" proposal and to the fact that it has not been considered by the NSC Review Group. Discussion of this as well as the other proposals should be postponed until the next NSC meeting.

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MEMORANDUM

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June 17, 1969

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: Henry A. Kissinger

SUBJECT: June 18 NSC Meeting on U.S. Strategic Posture
and SALT

Enclosed are materials for you to use at the June 18 NSC Meeting on the U.S. Strategic Posture and SALT.

The major purposes of this meeting are:

- to finish the discussion of the NSSM-3 study of the strategic posture;
- to begin the review of SALT by hearing initial briefings on our SALT studies.

With respect to the strategic posture, the primary objective at this point is to affirm the four criteria of strategic sufficiency outlined in the paper. (These criteria are summarized at the "Summary of Decisions" tab). This is important because it will establish clear guidelines for the SALT talks and for consultations with our allies.

I recommend that the meeting be conducted as follows:

- Ask me to begin the discussion of NSSM-3 by reviewing the issues raised at last week's meeting. A summary of the decisions to be reached is at the "Summary of Decisions" tab. A list of additional studies that should be conducted on our strategic posture is at the same tab.
- Following this discussion, ask Gerry Smith to begin our consideration of the SALT issues by briefing the NSC on the results of the interdepartmental review. Then call on Dick Helms, who will cover U.S. verification capability, and Dave Packard, who will summarize the analyses of SALT options.

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- Conclude the meeting by noting that at the next NSC meeting we will begin discussing the specific issues associated with developing a U.S. negotiating position.

There may be efforts to begin discussion of SALT issues at this meeting, especially a "stop-where-we-are proposal" put together by ACDA. This proposal is important, but it will not be considered by the Review Group until Thursday. I believe we should postpone discussions of SALT issues until the next NSC meeting.

At the first tab are talking points, which correspond to the procedures I have just outlined.

At the second tab is a page summarizing the decisions that I recommend you make on strategic policy issues and a page summarizing the follow-on strategic studies that should be undertaken.

At the third tab is a longer paper providing additional discussion of the strategic policy issues to be decided and follow-on studies to be undertaken.

At the fourth tab is a summary of the Strategic Posture Study prepared by the NSC Review Group.

At the fifth tab is a summary of the NSC study on Strategic Arms Limitation Proposals. Prior to our next NSC meeting, I will have additional materials for you to review in conjunction with the SALT paper.

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NSC MEETING

June 18, 1969

TALKING POINTS

REVIEW OF THE U.S. STRATEGIC POSTURE AND
STRATEGIC ARMS LIMITATION PROPOSALS

Opening Comment

I would like to start the meeting by continuing our discussions of the strategic policy issues raised by the NSSM-3 review of the U.S. Strategic Posture.

Following this discussion, Mr. Smith will present briefings on the summary report of the Strategic Arms Limitation Study. Dick Helms will cover U.S. verification capability. Dave Packard will discuss the results of the strategic analysis of SALT options.

At our next NSC meeting, we will discuss the substantive issues associated with our preparation of a U. S. position for strategic arms limitation talks.

Discussion

I would like Dr. Kissinger to start the discussion by summarizing the strategic policy issues that we will have to resolve. I think our main objective in this discussion should be to affirm the four criteria for strategic sufficiency outlined in the paper. This will provide us with clear guide lines for consulting with our Allies and for evaluating arms control options.

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I think we should continue with our studies on strategic policy issues.
I am particularly interested in seeing further analysis of less than all-out attacks. This issue is discussed on page 5 of the Review Group paper.
Such a possibility seems to me to have important implications for strategic planning.

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SUMMARY OF DECISIONS

1. Criteria for Strategic Sufficiency.

a. Endorse the four conditions for strategic sufficiency put forward by the NSC Review Group:

(1) Maintain high confidence that our second strike capability is sufficient to deter an all-out surprise attack on our strategic forces.

(2) Maintain forces to insure that the Soviet Union would have no incentive to strike the United States first in a crisis.

(3) Maintain the capability to deny to the Soviet Union the ability to cause significantly more deaths and industrial damage in the United States in a nuclear war than they themselves would suffer.

(4) Deploy defenses which limit damage from small attacks or accidental launches to a low level.

b. Specifically endorse maintaining an ABM capability against attacks by minor nuclear powers and accidents in any arms limitations agreement. Also, indicate that you want to keep open the option of completing the entire Safeguard deployment until you have further considered the matter in the NSC discussions on strategic arms limitations.

2. Changes to our Present Strategic Programs.

Indicate that you do not want to make other than minimum changes in our present strategic programs pending further analysis of strategic force alternatives.

3. The Threat to be Used in Planning.

Indicate that you want to continue to plan forces against the high intelligence projection of the threat, but also maintain options to deploy new systems against greater threats.

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SUMMARY OF SUBJECTS
FOR FOLLOW-ON STUDIES

1. Additional Questions for SALT Discussions

Ask that the presentation on strategic arms limitation options include answers to the following questions:

a. How many ABM missiles and radars must be retained to have an area defense against minor nuclear powers and accidental launches?

b. What are the changes each arms control option introduces in our strategic coverage of targets of concern to our NATO allies or in Soviet opportunities to increase the nuclear threat?

2. Follow-on Study of Strategic Forces

Direct that a follow-on study be undertaken encompassing the following:

a. The relationship among our strategic nuclear, tactical nuclear, and conventional postures.

b. The concept of disarming attacks and their implications for force design and command and control systems.

c. Further analysis of war-initiation, war-waging and war outcomes and possible additional criteria for the design of strategic forces.

d. Evaluation of force postures containing different mixes of bombers, sea-based missiles, land-based missiles and defenses.

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DISCUSSION OF
ISSUES FOR DECISION
AND FOLLOW-ON STUDIES

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|-------|--|
| Tab A | 1. Criteria for Strategic Sufficiency |
| Tab B | 2. Changes to our Present Strategic Programs |
| Tab C | 3. The Threat to be Used in Planning |
| Tab D | Follow-on Studies |
| | 1. Additional Discussions for SALT Discussions |
| | 2. Follow-on Study of Strategic Forces |

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1. Criteria for Strategic Sufficiency.

The most important issue to be decided is the specific criteria that should govern the U.S. strategic posture. These criteria will constitute the yardsticks not only for assessing the adequacy of U.S. strategic forces but, of immediate importance, for assessing the desirability of possible strategic arms limitation agreements with the Soviet Union.

It is important that you decide on specific criteria for our strategic posture. Otherwise, each agency will feel free to define the term "strategic sufficiency" in its own way and design its policies according to its own view of what sufficiency implies. The resulting inconsistencies will greatly complicate the formulation of coherent strategic policies and their implementation.

The Review Group agreed on the following criteria for strategic sufficiency as far as nuclear attacks on the United States are concerned:

- maintain high confidence that our second strike capability is sufficient to deter an all-out surprise attack on our strategic forces,
- maintain forces to insure that the Soviet Union would have no incentive to strike the United States first in a crisis,
- maintain the capability to deny to the Soviet Union the ability to cause significantly more deaths and industrial damage in the United States in a nuclear war than they themselves would suffer, and
- deploy defenses which limit damage from small attacks or accidental launches to a low level.

There are three problems with these criteria:

- a. If you approve the criterion to "deploy defenses which limit damage from small attacks or accidental launches to a low level," you will rule out the possibility of banning ABMs altogether in a

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Tab A

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strategic arms limitation agreement with the Soviet Union. Moreover, allowing ABMs in an agreement increases the likelihood that both sides will want to retain MIRVs as a hedge against the possible need to penetrate the other side's ballistic missile defenses. At Tab A is a short paper which discusses the question of ABMs and MIRVs and how they affect our strategic capabilities and the possibilities for arms control.

I believe we should plan on retaining at least that part of the Safeguard ABM program designed to:

- defend the American people against the kind of primitive nuclear attack or nuclear blackmail which countries such as Communist China may be able to threaten within a decade or so,
- protect against the possibility of accidental or unauthorized attacks from any source.

If neither we nor the Soviet Union had such a light defense, any country could become a "nuclear superpower" by acquiring a few missiles which could be launched against New York or Moscow. Possession of such defenses is likely to promote more stable behavior during crises involving third countries with nuclear weapons because it shields the defended country from cheap and easy blackmail threats. Thus, ABM defenses offer important political advantages. In addition, it would be irresponsible to deny ourselves protection against accidental launches or irrational acts if it is within our power to obtain it.

I believe there are important arguments for retaining an ABM defense of Minuteman and of our bombers as well. Such defenses will make us obsessively concerned with improvements in Soviet missile yields and accuracies, with the development of accurate MIRV's, and with significant improvements in their submarine launched ballistic missiles. Seen in this light, ABM's could tend to stabilize the strategic arms competition because the defended country doesn't need to react to every improvement in the enemy's offensive forces.

Gerry Smith, and probably Secretary Rogers and Elliot Richardson, will almost certainly argue that you should not foreclose the possibility of an ABM ban. The State Department tends to have doubts about the political utility of a limited ABM system. Gerry Smith's people have

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argued that the value of ABM's against light attacks must be balanced against the effects which light defenses on both sides would have on the prospects for a Soviet-American agreement. Light defenses would mean that both sides had built all of the large radars which they need for a heavy defense. This would make us much more sensitive to Soviet cheating on ABM launchers and would almost certainly force the Soviets into a substantial MIRV deployment.

b. Although there was agreement at the Review Group and in the Steering Group on the second and third criteria, you should be aware that some people in ACDA and State would prefer to limit the criteria for the design of our strategic forces only to assure destruction, defined in terms of the percentage of the Soviet population we can kill after an all-out Soviet surprise attack on U.S. strategic forces. They would prefer this position because it would give the maximum freedom of action in negotiations. However, both Alex Johnson and Gerry Smith rejected this "minimum deterrence" position in the Steering Group and I do not expect the problem to be raised.

My problem with "minimum deterrence" is that it is based on an extremely narrow view of the possibilities of nuclear conflict and of the uses of U.S. nuclear strength. It supposes that:

-- if our strategic capabilities are restricted to attacking Soviet cities in retaliation to an all-out surprise attack, all other forms of nuclear aggression are also deterred,

-- no useful purpose is served by holding open the possibility, backed by the necessary U.S. forces, that the U.S. could control the pace and destructiveness of any nuclear exchange no matter how it starts.

I believe it would be a mistake to enter into agreements which might restrict our options in this manner.

I strongly recommend that the NSC discussion of NSSM-3 clearly resolve the substantive questions of what strategic capabilities we must maintain. This will insure that clear guidelines will be available for evaluating arms control options. Otherwise, the discussion of arms control options will be too open ended; we might tend to lose sight of our basic strategic objectives and concentrate too heavily on whether options are sufficiently "comprehensive,"

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"negotiable," "verifiable," etc. The more substantive issues that can be resolved in the NSSM-3 discussion, the less pressure and controversy will accompany the SALT discussions.

Thus, I recommend that you:

-- endorse the four conditions for strategic sufficiency put forward by the Review Group,

-- specifically note your endorsement of preserving an ABM capability at least against attacks by minor nuclear powers and accidents. Also, you should indicate that you specifically want to keep open the option of completing the entire Safeguard deployment at least until you have further considered the matter in the NSC discussions on strategic arms limitation options,

-- ask that the NSSM-28 paper on SALT answer the question, how many ABM missiles and radars must be retained to have an area defense against minor nuclear powers and accidental launches?

c. The study did not define the strategic forces required to support our alliances, particularly in Europe, or determine the contribution of strategic forces to the deterrence of conventional war. Nor did the study analyze concepts for the deployment and use of tactical nuclear weapons. The Steering Group decided to consider these issues in the second part of the NSSM-3 study, which deals primarily with our conventional forces. They made this decision for two main reasons: (1) they wanted more time to analyze the problem, (2) there seems to be a strongly held view in the Government that there is very little relationship between our strategic posture (and our tactical nuclear posture as well) and deterring or coping with conventional war. This view seems to be based on two conclusions: (a) our strategic forces can contribute to the deterrence of conventional war only if we have a credible first strike capability, which is not possible to attain, and (b) tactical nuclear war in Europe would probably end in our defeat, so we have no incentive to rely on tactical nuclear weapons as a hedge against weaknesses in our conventional posture.

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Until we have examined these issues, we cannot be confident that strategic arms control options adequately protect our Allies' interests. Our Allies have raised cogent questions along these lines, and we are not now in a position to address many of them properly. Shortly I will seek your approval of a National Security Study Memorandum which directs an in-depth analysis of these issues to complement the second part of NSSM-3.

However, so that our SALT consultations with our Allies are meaningful, you may want to ask that the NSSM-28 paper specifically address the question:

-- what are the changes each arms control option introduces in our strategic coverage of targets of concern to our NATO allies or in Soviet opportunities to increase the nuclear threat to Europe?

d. The Joint Chiefs want you to endorse a fifth condition for sufficiency:

-- have the capability to insure relatively favorable outcomes if deterrence fails.

The other members of the study's Steering Group did not endorse this as a condition for sufficiency. Their reason was that it is difficult to develop a meaningful definition of strategic capability required to meet this condition; without such a definition, endorsement of such a condition would give the JCS an opportunity to claim that no reasonable posture was adequate and an open-ended charter to ask for more forces.

If General Wheeler presses this point, I recommend that you express interest in his view and strong interest in additional study of the issue before you make a final judgment.

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2. Changes to our Present Strategic Programs

Even if you approve the criteria for sufficiency discussed at Tab A there are different approaches you can take to communicating our strategic purposes to both our Allies and the Soviet Union and tailoring our strategic programs to these ends. The Review Group suggested three alternatives:

- a. Emphasize the need to improve the U.S. strategic position. Indicate strong interest in initiatives to develop and deploy new systems in response to the continued build-up of Soviet strategic forces.
- b. Make minimum changes to our present programs. Proceed with MIRVs, Safeguard and eventually with other programs as needed to maintain strategic sufficiency as defined above.
- c. Exercise restraint on new strategic arms programs as a means of promoting prospects for strategic arms limitations. Consider delays or moratoriums on MIRV testing and possibly a compromise on Safeguard.

Your decision on this issue will determine the public posture, and the associated tempo of strategic weapons developments, with which the U.S. approaches and conducts SALT. The crucial question is how will our NATO Allies and the Soviet Union react politically, and how will they react in terms of their military force planning?

State, ACDA and the CIA seem to believe strongly that strategic initiatives or assertions of U.S. determination to remain strategically powerful would on balance disappoint and worry our Allies because of their fear of an accelerating arms race and would lead to a deterioration of East-West relations because of hardening Soviet attitudes. Also, it seems to be widely believed that Soviet strategic decisions are highly sensitive to our own decisions and that every U.S. action will provoke an offsetting Soviet reaction.

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I do not believe the evidence justifies either the strength with which these views are held or the lack of strong dissenting views. It is equally plausible in my judgment that on-balance Europeans would be relieved at clear demonstrations of U.S. strategic resolve and that the Soviet leadership, faced with very real economic problems, would be more rather than less interested in seeking some form of slow down in the competition.

At this time I cannot recommend that you do other than make minimum changes to our present programs. On the other hand, in the face of the Soviet strategic build-up and the great uncertainties about where talks will lead, I strongly recommend against further restraint because of the risks I believe that course would entail.

However, I would make endorsement of minimum changes to present programs conditional pending further study of what I believe is one of the most important issues raised by the study: the possibility that Soviet strategic planning may come to embrace "disarming attacks," i. e., less than all-out strikes on U.S. forces designed (1) to improve the Soviets' relative military position, and (2) to confront us with the possibility that it would be better to halt the war rather than retaliate and risk the loss of U.S. cities. (This possibility is mentioned on page 5 of the Summary Report.) In my view, a less than all-out strike would be the most sensible strategy for us to consider under the extreme pressures of a nuclear crisis or threat, and we should guard against the possibility that Soviet planners may have similar views.

The following example illustrates the point. Suppose that during a Berlin crisis, the Soviet leaders believed the United States might start a nuclear war. Rather than risk being struck first, the Soviet Union might consider using a portion of its strategic forces to strike U.S. forces in order to improve its relative military position. The President would then have to decide as best he could the remaining U.S. forces that he could use, and he would have to assess the remaining Soviet threat. Considering all the enormous uncertainties that would exist at such a time, should he respond by striking Soviet cities, knowing some American cities are still hostage, or should he strike Soviet forces in order to redress or improve the relative

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military situation? Suppose he is informed that even if he attacks with everything he has left, he still cannot destroy the Soviet capacity to retaliate unacceptably against U.S. cities. What should he do then? He faces a serious dilemma, far more serious than if he knew he had received an all-out Soviet attack, with full retaliation the unambiguously correct response.

Though this may seem like an obscure doctrinal question, it has highly important implications for the war fighting qualities we want in our forces and for the kinds of command, control and decision mechanisms we want to maintain. One of the most serious potential weaknesses in our strategic posture is our vulnerability to less than all-out Soviet attacks on our forces. Yet, I have encountered near-unanimous opposition (or at best indifference) within the government to giving serious consideration to this issue. The explanation for this opposition is, I believe, a reluctance to investigate concepts that may produce a sound rationale to increase our budget for the development of new strategic forces, with all the difficulties this would apparently pose for arms control and for coping with political opposition to Administration defense programs.

I recommend that you express interest in the concept of "disarming attacks" and the problems it poses and ask for further study of the issue.

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3. The Threat to be Used in Planning

The third issue for decision raised by the Review Group concerns the principles that should guide the design of our strategic forces in order to deal with uncertainties in the future strategic relationship between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. Though these questions are technical in nature, the way they are resolved involves policy judgments which have an important bearing on the budget for strategic forces and on the tempo of U.S. weapons deployments. There are two questions:

a. Against what threat should we design our forces? The options are:

-- Buy forces to counter threats considerably greater than the highest intelligence projections. This approach hedges against possible threats before they appear. For example, we would decide to deploy ABMs against the possible threat of accurate Soviet MIRVs and a large SS-9 force well in advance of hard evidence that the Soviets were in fact developing such a capability.

-- Buy forces against the high intelligence projection of the threat, but also maintain options to deploy new systems against greater threats. This is essentially what we do now. For example, we would not decide to deploy ABMs until the high intelligence projection of the threat justified it. Prior to that time, however, we would pursue a vigorous development program so that we had the option to deploy whenever it became necessary.

-- Buy forces against the most likely Soviet threat, maintaining options to deploy additional weapons if increased threats emerged. Put increased emphasis on advanced weapons development as insurance. We would in effect wait longer to see how threats developed. We would probably not have decided to deploy our Safeguard ABM system when we did because the threat was still somewhat uncertain at the time.

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Tab C

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I recommend the second alternative. The high intelligence projections are speculative at best, and even greater threats are pure guesswork. The first alternative would tend to commit us to hardware programs too soon, and the programs would probably not be well designed. The study showed that if we committed ourselves to this approach, we might have to spend \$4-6 billion more per year on strategic forces and probably not get our money's worth. I have detected no real disagreement with this view.

b. How much redundancy should we buy in our deterrent? Now we maintain an independent second strike capability in each component of our forces: bombers, land-based missiles and sea-based missiles. We do this as insurance against the possibility that any one system will fail or be negated, for example, that the Soviets would develop an effective counter to our submarines, that our bombers couldn't get through the Soviets' air defenses, or that our ICBMs wouldn't launch properly. But we could change the balance of our forces, e. g. by reducing emphasis on bombers or land-based missiles, and still maintain an adequate posture. Some argue that bombers are really obsolete, and money spent on a new bomber would be far better spent on better missiles. Others argue that we are too reliant on fixed land-based missiles, and that it would be more efficient to rely more on sea-based missiles and ballistic missile defenses. It must be conceded that we continue with our present policy partly out of inertia and the vested interests that have developed on behalf of each force component. The Air Force would vigorously resist a downgrading of the manned bomber.

I recommend that you express interest in having the Defense Department consider other possibly more attractive force balances in the follow-on study. At the very least I believe this will stimulate new thinking and perhaps valuable new ideas.

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FOLLOW-ON STUDIES

1. Additional Discussions for SALT Discussions

The NSSM-28 Steering Group on SALT should consider on an urgent basis the questions:

- how many ABM missiles and radars must be retained to have an area defense against minor nuclear powers and accidental launches?
- what are the changes each arms control option introduces in our strategic coverage of targets of concern to our NATO allies or in Soviet opportunities to increase the nuclear threat to Europe?

2. Follow-on Study of Strategic Forces

I think it is of considerable importance to have a follow-on study of strategic policies and forces, both because there are still key issues to be resolved and because it is desirable to preserve the momentum that has been established on this critical subject.

This study should encompass:

- the relationship among our strategic nuclear, tactical nuclear, and conventional postures,
- the concept of disarming attacks and their implications for force design and command and control systems,
- further analysis of war-initiation, war-waging and war outcomes and possible additional criteria for the design of strategic forces,
- evaluation of force postures containing different mixes of bombers, sea-based missiles, land-based missiles and defenses.

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U.S. STRATEGIC POSTURE:
BASIC ISSUES

I. For What Purposes Do We Maintain Strategic Forces?

There is general agreement that the overriding purpose of our strategic posture is political and defensive: to deny other countries the ability to impose their will on the United States and its allies under the weight of strategic military superiority. We want all potential aggressors to know that a nuclear attack, nuclear blackmail, and acts -- such as a large scale Soviet conventional attack on Europe -- which could escalate to strategic nuclear war involve unacceptable risks to them.

There is also general agreement that the primary military purposes of our strategic forces are:

- to reduce the likelihood that nuclear war will occur,
- to protect ourselves and our Allies from the destructive consequence of nuclear wars, insofar as we can, and
- to be capable of controlling strategic nuclear conflicts so that the possible outcomes leave the United States and its Allies in a relatively advantageous position.

A fourth military purpose of our strategic forces is to deter or, if appropriate, cope with large scale conventional attacks on our allies. The strategic capability required for this purpose and its relationship to required tactical nuclear and conventional forces need further study. The second part of the NSSM-3 study will address these issues more fully.

Though agreement can be reached on these purposes, it is no simple matter to translate them into strategic forces, plans and budgets. To do so, several basic issues must be resolved.

II. Basic Issues in Designing Our Strategic Posture

The evaluation of strategic options at the end of this paper will depend upon judgments on the following basic issues.

A. Political Issues

1. How conservative should we be in carrying out U.S. strategic purposes?

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The Steering Group Report notes that our basic interests dictate that our strategic posture be militarily sufficient at all times and that this sufficiency and our resolve to use it be evident and credible. It also notes that our basically defensive purposes must be unmistakably clear.

There are differing views about how best to achieve these ends. Some will argue that we must make decisions to deploy new strategic weapon systems in anticipation of possible threats in order to reduce the risks we face to the maximum feasible extent and leave no doubts as to our resolve to maintain or improve as necessary the capabilities of our strategic posture.

Others will view deployments of new systems in anticipation of threats as premature and inconsistent with our defensive and non-provocative objectives. They will maintain that such deployments could and probably would stimulate Soviet responses and in effect create or at least make more likely the anticipated Soviet threat. They will counsel restraint in making such decisions and the amassing of unambiguous evidence that the threat justifies them. They will express the belief that a strong research and development effort will provide an adequate hedge against uncertainty.

2. How should we assess Soviet strategic objectives?

The Steering Group Report notes that the actions we must take to secure our interests, and the extent to which we must develop, buy and maintain strategic nuclear forces for this purpose, depend very much on the purposes of the Soviet Union. The Report also notes that Soviet strategic objectives may not be fixed and probably will be influenced by the ways we design our forces and communicate our intent. Thus, there are two partially overlapping issues:

-- What are the Soviet Union's strategic objectives?

-- How will Soviet strategic decisions be influenced by what we do?

a. Soviet strategic objectives.

One view, reflected in the Report of the Working Group on Soviet and Other Foreign Reactions, emphasizes the likelihood that Soviet strategic objectives are similar to ours: mutual deterrence of nuclear attacks and the limitation of damage if deterrence fails and

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nuclear war occurs. The Soviets' most important political and military goal, at least for the foreseeable future, is a strategic posture which is roughly as capable as that of the U.S.

The Steering Group Report notes the possibility, however, that the Soviets may have as a continuing goal clear superiority in at least some aspects of strategic capability. The Soviets' present buildup of strategic forces, together with what we know about their development and test programs, raises serious questions about where they are headed and the potential threats we and our allies face.

b. Likely Soviet reactions to U.S. strategic initiatives.

The Steering Group agreed that if U.S. strategic policies and decisions convinced the Soviet leadership that we were seeking to take away the Soviet deterrent, they would react immediately with the deployments needed to maintain their deterrent. However, it is impossible to say with confidence whether or not these Soviet reactions would offset fully our actions. It is also impossible to say whether or how the Soviets would increase their deployments in response to improvements in the U.S. strategic capability which did not signal a clear threat to the Soviet deterrent.

The Soviet political reaction to a substantial increase in U.S. strategic capabilities is also uncertain. Some believe that the Soviets would react by seeking detente, particularly if the Soviets were unwilling to increase significantly their budget for strategic forces at the expense of overall economic growth or at the expense of their general purpose force posture. Others believe that the Soviet reaction is more likely to result in a hardening of Soviet political positions and attitudes and an increase in tension.

3. How shall we take Allied interests into account?

There is agreement that our allies and other non-nuclear countries have a major stake in the U.S. strategic posture. They look to our strength to deter nuclear war and to protect them from aggression or from coercion which is backed by a credible nuclear threat. Commitments to Allies impose additional requirements on U.S. strategic forces which must be considered in assessing the adequacy of these forces. Thus our strategic policies and forces are important elements in our relationships with Allies and other countries.

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There is also agreement that our Allies would be deeply worried if the U.S. appeared to be indifferent to growing Soviet strategic strength. They might doubt that we were still willing to defend them if they faced an actual or threatened large scale conventional attack.

The issue is how our Allies, particularly in Europe, would react to a determined U.S. attempt to increase its relative strategic capabilities. The answer depends on how the present strategic relationship between the U.S. and the Soviet Union is perceived. Widely different perceptions exist among our Allies and among important elements of political opinion within certain countries.

To some of those who view present U.S. strategic capabilities as clearly superior, U.S. initiatives would go against their hopes that East-West tensions could be reduced. They would fear that increased U.S. -Soviet strategic competition would increase the nuclear threat to Europe, particularly if a major Soviet strategic build-up seemed to be in prospect. Others, however, would tend to discount such concerns and emphasize the desirability of U.S. superiority as the best guarantee against Soviet attack or pressure.

Some of those who perceive a significant deterioration in relative U.S. strategic capabilities would probably welcome U.S. strategic initiatives as an indication of U.S. resolve to maintain powerful strategic forces to deter not only nuclear war but major aggression of any kind in Europe. Some, however, would question the necessity of such initiatives under present circumstances on the grounds that the present and foreseeable balance is adequate to maintain deterrence.

4. What are the implications of China's nuclear program?

The Steering Group Report notes that we and the Soviet Union are faced with great uncertainties because it is possible that China, and perhaps other countries, may acquire a strategic nuclear capability. We may find it increasingly difficult to determine in the early stages whether Soviet strategic missile and ABM programs are directed at the U.S. or at China, and such uncertainties may make it more difficult to determine appropriate U.S. responses.

The issue concerns the nuclear guarantees we extend to countries threatened by China's nuclear program. It has been our

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policy to extend to our Allies general assurances of U.S. protection against nuclear threats or nuclear attacks while avoiding specifics. We have given no assurances to other states in Asia. How can we make such guarantees credible, and is it in our interest to do so?

B. Military Issues

1. What kinds of Soviet nuclear attacks on the U.S. must we deter?

Three general views were considered in the course of the study.

a. Emphasis on "assured destruction."

According to this view, the main criterion for evaluating the U.S. strategic deterrent is our capability to strike back and destroy Soviet society after absorbing an all-out, surprise Soviet attack on our strategic forces. If we can destroy with high confidence a fourth to a half of Soviet population and industry after the worst conceivable Soviet attack on our forces -- a capability we can refer to as our assured destruction capability -- nuclear war is effectively deterred. By and large, this is the view that has prevailed up to now.

b. Emphasis on crisis stability.

According to this view, there are additional criteria that should be used to evaluate the U.S. strategic posture. For example, the Soviets may launch an all-out attack against both U.S. forces and cities in a period of crisis or tension if they believe (1) that to do so will assure a significantly better result for them than absorbing a U.S. first strike, and (2) that a U.S. first strike is highly likely. Our forces must be designed to eliminate all Soviet incentives to strike first in a crisis as well as to provide a second strike capability as defined by the assured destruction criterion.

c. Additional emphasis on disarming attacks.

A third view emphasizes, in addition to the considerations above, the possibilities of less than all-out Soviet strikes on U.S. forces designed (1) to improve the Soviets relative military position and (2) to confront us with the possibility that it would be better to halt the war rather than retaliate and risk the loss of U.S. cities. Concern about such attacks would lead to a greater emphasis on war fighting qualities in our forces and greatly improved command, control and decision mechanisms.

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Most of the Steering Group could not endorse the third view as a criterion for designing forces, noting that less than all-out attacks have no precedent in Soviet military doctrine. Nevertheless, the Steering Group believes the President can be provided options in this regard through proper design of command and control and crisis management mechanisms.

2. To what extent should we seek to limit damage to ourselves in a nuclear war?

The Steering Group agreed that we don't want the Soviet Union to believe that if it starts a war, significantly more destruction and death will occur in America than in the Soviet Union. There would be extreme psychological and political disadvantages to the United States if we were in such a position.

The Steering Group also agreed that within the time period of the study, there is no prospect that we could limit damage to ourselves so effectively that we would take away the Soviet Union's nuclear deterrent.

The issue is, between these two limits -- i.e. holding U.S. deaths to a level no greater than Soviet deaths (now 90-120 million) and holding U.S. deaths to extremely low levels -- where do we draw the line? Does it make sense for us to buy additional strategic forces, such as ballistic missile defenses, to bring U.S. deaths down to 60 million?

There is agreement that we would want such a capability if we could have it without sacrificing the attainment of other national objectives. There is disagreement about whether this is possible.

One view holds that this is possible, that we could buy more damage limiting capability without threatening the Soviet deterrent and thus without provoking an offsetting Soviet reaction.

The other view, held by most of the Steering Group, is that the Soviets, using pessimistic assumptions about our capabilities and intentions, would certainly react, perhaps even overreact, and largely offset the U.S. damage limiting initiatives.

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The Steering Group also agreed that we can and should protect ourselves against small, including accidental, attacks from any source. We can expect forces bought for this purpose to be highly effective.

3. How well should we be able to control our forces in nuclear war?

The study did not undertake an in-depth review of our command, control and communications systems or of our plans for the use of our strategic forces.

The Steering Group Report noted, however, that strategic exchanges need not be spasm reactions. They may develop as a series of steps in an escalating crisis in which both sides want to avoid attacking cities, neither side can afford unilaterally to stop the exchange, and the situation is dominated by uncertainty.

The capability or selective use of strategic weapons gives us response options which may be more attractive than launching all-out attacks or not responding at all. Thus in the design of our forces we should consider for not only a good command and control system, but also the additional system characteristics which are needed to perform the selective mission.

This and other considerations in the study strongly underscored the need for further study of these aspects of strategic capabilities.

III. Results of the Analysis

A. Summary of the Approach

The Department of Defense examined four nuclear strategies which varied widely in the military objectives they were designed to achieve. These strategies differed in the emphasis they placed on the following factors: our confidence in our ability to deter nuclear attacks in a variety of circumstances, the extent to which we can limit damage to the United States in a nuclear war, and the relative advantage which the United States could achieve in a nuclear war with the Soviet Union. The strategies ranged from those which were designed to achieve "dominance" or "superiority" over the Soviet Union -- mainly by seeking extremely effective damage limiting capability -- to those which were designed primarily to deter an all-out Soviet attack on the United States and include additional forces to limit damage only from small attacks. The strategies do not take into account possible alternative civil defense postures, which will be the subject of NSSM 57.

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Eighteen representative U.S. strategic force structures were developed and grouped into five categories which correspond roughly to the four strategies. At the same time, a Working Group on Foreign Political and Military Reactions, chaired by the Central Intelligence Agency, estimated possible Soviet military responses to each of these strategies and force categories. Using a range of representative Soviet threats, including the postulated Soviet responses to each strategy, the U.S. forces were reevaluated to see how well they could meet the military objectives for which they were designed. The analysis was broken off at this point without considering further responses and reevaluations.

Another Working Group, chaired by the Department of State, evaluated the broad foreign policy implications of each strategy and force category.

B. Conclusions

Based on the results of the analysis, the Steering Group reached the following conclusions:

1. Though Soviet strategic capabilities are approaching our own, we are highly confident that the United States can maintain a credible strategic posture with respect to attacks on the U.S. no matter how Soviet strategic programs develop. However,

- a. We cannot expect to regain a position that will be seen as markedly superior because the Soviets are unlikely to relinquish the gains they have worked so hard to achieve.

- b. Unilateral reductions in the U.S. posture, though they might not jeopardize our deterrent in many respects, would almost certainly raise doubts about U.S. resolve among our Allies and involve some important military risks.

2. As far as Soviet strategic objectives are concerned, we are confident that the Soviet Union is determined to deter attacks by the United States. However, the study could not resolve the following two uncertainties:

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a. What are Soviet long-term strategic objectives beyond that of deterring a deliberate all-out attack?

b. How do the Soviets view the objectives of the U.S. strategic program and do they feel highly threatened by it?

Since both sides recognize that strategic decisions are interrelated, there may be opportunities to cooperate to reduce threats and uncertainties. Arms control criteria and procedures may be able to make important contributions.

3. As far as specific military capabilities are concerned, the Steering Group agrees that we can and should

- maintain high confidence that our second strike capability is sufficient to deter an all-out Soviet surprise attack on our strategic forces,

- maintain forces to insure that the Soviet Union would have no incentive to strike the United States first in a crisis,

- maintain the capability to deny to the Soviet Union the ability to cause significantly more deaths and industrial damage in the United States in a nuclear war than they themselves would suffer, and

- deploy defenses which limit damage from small attacks or accidental launches to a low level.

These four conditions in effect define strategic sufficiency as far as nuclear attacks on the United States are concerned.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff would add as a fifth condition, "Have the capability to insure relatively favorable outcomes if deterrence fails." By this they mean a capability for a relatively favorable ratio of fatalities, industrial damage, and residual military assets, as well as for the destruction of a comprehensive military target system under a wide range of war-initiation, war-waging and war-termination analyses. They note that the ultimate measure of strategic sufficiency, if deterrence fails, is the resulting overall relative power relationship of opponents which would enable the U.S. and its Allies to control effectively the course of a political or military situation. The rest of the Steering Group did not endorse this as a condition for sufficiency because it does not describe a specific capability which can be achieved.

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As noted above, additional study is needed to define the strategic forces required to support theater forces and to determine the contribution of strategic forces to the deterrence of conventional war. These subjects are being considered in the second part of the NSSM-3 study.

The Steering Group also generally agreed that the Soviets have the capability to react and largely offset U.S. strategies designed to achieve a significantly greater capability to limit damage to ourselves in a nuclear war, though it is not clear just what the Soviets would judge to be a threat to their deterrent and precisely how they would react.

IV. Strategic Options

These conclusions do not resolve all major questions of strategic forces and policy. The Steering Group has identified two major issues for Presidential consideration:

-- What principles should guide the design of our strategic forces in order to deal with uncertainties in the future strategic relationships between U.S. and the Soviet Union?

-- What public posture should the President take at this time regarding U.S. -Soviet strategic relationships and what actions are necessary to support that posture?

A. Planning Strategic Forces

We deal with uncertainty when designing our strategic forces in two ways:

- by being pessimistic about the Soviet threat and
- by designing considerable redundancy into our posture.

The Steering Group believes that how and why we do this are essentially policy judgments which need to be made in the light of the overall political and military context.

The judgments relating to the adequacy, redundancy, and effectiveness of forces in the following options do not specifically address the requirements for the destruction of a comprehensive military target system, commitment to Allies or the interaction with General Purpose Forces.

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1. Against what threat should we design our forces?

The options are:

a. Buy forces to counter threats considerably greater than the highest intelligence projections. This approach hedges against possible threats before they appear.

Pro:

-- We could have extremely high confidence in our strategic capabilities.

-- We would always have the initiative in force deployments.

-- The Soviets might have a greater incentive to negotiate mutual restraints on strategic deployments.

Con:

-- The forces would probably be larger than we need for sufficiency.

-- These forces would cost \$4 to \$6 billion more per year than the current program, which costs \$14-\$15 billion per year.

-- The Soviets would almost certainly deploy more forces than they would otherwise.

b. Buy forces against the high intelligence projections of the threat, but also maintain options to deploy new systems against greater threats. This is essentially what we do now.

Pro:

-- We would have high confidence in our strategic capabilities, with adequate protection against surprise.

-- Such an approach is less provocative than being extremely pessimistic and thus is less of a stimulus to strategic arms competition.

-- The necessary forces could cost between \$1 billion more to \$1 billion less than the present program.

Con:

-- We would still be buying more forces than we actually need if the threat turns out to be less than the high projection.

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-- On balance, we might be encouraging an acceleration in the strategic arms build-up by the Soviet Union.

-- On the other hand, there would be some risk that we would be surprised by unexpected changes in Soviet objectives and technological breakthroughs.

c. Buy forces against the most likely Soviet threat, maintaining the options to deploy additional weapons if increased threats emerged. Put increased emphasis on advanced weapons development as insurance.

Pro:

-- We would be buying forces adequate for sufficiency against the estimated likely threat.

-- We could emphasize our restraint in strategic decisions and thereby encourage a more responsible Soviet weapons policy.

-- The needed forces could cost \$1 to \$2 billion less per year than the present program.

Con:

-- Our strategic capabilities would be more sensitive to relatively small changes in the Soviet threat.

-- We would be accepting significant risks associated with changed Soviet objectives, covert deployments, or technological breakthroughs.

-- Depending on Soviet forces at the time our confidence in crises might be reduced if we adopted such a policy.

2. How much redundancy should we buy in our deterrent?

The main way we buy redundancy in our deterrent is to maintain a significant strategic capability in each of three force components: land-based missiles, sea-based missiles and bombers. Following are the options:

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a. Maintain an independent capability in each of the force categories. This is our present approach.

Pro:

-- This policy gives us high confidence in our capabilities because we are not dependent on one or even two systems.

-- Soviet offensive and defensive planning become more complicated and expensive than if we had our eggs in fewer baskets.

Con:

-- This policy means that we maintain a much stronger force than we need for deterrence.

-- Even with this policy, there is no guarantee that the combined force, operating in concert, will be adequate for the full range of possible contingencies.

b. Maintain three force components, but do not insist on an independent capability in each.

Pro:

-- This policy still maintains redundancy and thus some confidence in our capabilities.

-- It still forces Soviet planners to contend with three force components, but at less cost to us.

-- It is more consistent with a policy of restraint in strategic decisions.

-- We could save \$1 to \$2 billion per year compared to the present program.

Con:

-- We would be running the risk that our forces were not sufficient in all aspects. For example, our ability to deter some Soviet attacks in periods of crisis might be questionable.

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c. Do not maintain three force components.

We could phase out one or possibly two major force components, keeping, for example, only land-based and sea-based missiles or only sea-based missiles.

Pro:

-- This policy would further emphasize our restraint in strategic decisions.

-- A force of sea-based missiles only reduces Soviet incentives to make a first strike on the continental United States.

-- In the long term, this policy would cost \$2 to \$3 billion less per year than the present program.

Con:

-- Our strategic capabilities would be much more vulnerable to unexpected failures in the remaining components or to breakthroughs in Soviet countermeasures, such as unexpected increases in Soviet anti-submarine warfare capabilities.

-- Our confidence in the sufficiency of our strategic posture would be reduced.

-- A force of sea-based missiles only would be vulnerable to unexpected failures in our communications system.

B. U.S. Alternatives in Light of the Present U.S. -Soviet Strategic Relationship.

The Steering Group raised the issue of preserving an image of strength and resolve while maintaining stability in the strategic balance. Weapons choices and public statements can and will convey powerful messages to the Communist states, our Allies, and other countries. There are three general levels of capability that encompass the broad policy choices that exist at present.

The options are:

1. Emphasize the need for improving the U.S. strategic position. We would indicate strong interest in initiatives to develop

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and deploy new systems in response to the continued build-up of Soviet strategic forces. For example, we could concentrate on additional offensive weapons, including substantially larger numbers of MIRVs than now planned, or we might add both offensive and defensive weapons.

Pro:

-- This policy would clearly demonstrate, to the Soviet Union and our Allies, our determination to maintain our strategic strength with high confidence.

-- The Soviets might respond to stepped up U.S. deployments with efforts at detente or increased willingness to make concessions in arms control talks.

-- We could be confident we would retain the initiative in weapons deployments.

Con:

-- This policy would strengthen the hand of Soviet military leaders who would like to continue the build-up of Soviet strategic forces against the U.S. threat.

-- Such action and statements would jeopardize the success of strategic arms talks by calling into question our sincerity in seeking an agreement. It might lead to a general hardening of Soviet attitudes and positions.

2. Make minimum changes to our present programs. Proceed with MIRVs, Safeguard and eventually with other programs as needed to maintain sufficiency.

Pro:

-- This policy emphasizes moderation and restraint compared to Option 1 and should provide an adequate deterrent against likely Soviet threats and viable hedges against unexpected threats.

-- By proceeding with MIRVs and Safeguard, there would be no early need for further demonstrating to the Soviets that they have no hope of achieving strategic superiority.

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Con:

-- We might be passing up opportunities to improve our relative strategic capabilities.

-- On the other hand, our deployment of MIRVs and ABMs could jeopardize prospects for arms control.

3. Exercise restraint on new strategic arms programs as a means of promoting prospects for strategic arms limitations. We would emphasize our interest in talks. We could delay MIRV testing and possibly reduce the Safeguard program, and we could suspend these programs if the Soviets reciprocated. We would also emphasize that our programs would be resumed or accelerated if no agreement were reached or early progress made.

Pro:

-- We would be emphasizing our interest in strategic arms agreements without weakening our resolve not to be overtaken.

-- We would provide the Soviets with incentives to expedite progress toward an agreement.

-- If Soviet intransigence made decisions to resume our programs necessary, they would receive much broader support.

Con:

-- We would be giving up our position of strategic strength in negotiating with the Soviet Union.

-- Because the Soviets understand the political opposition to U.S. strategic programs, they would have an excuse to adopt dilatory tactics in talks.

-- Those who now argue that we could resume our programs if talks showed no progress would then argue against any act which would jeopardize talks.

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V. Unresolved Issues

The Steering Group identified three issues that require further analysis:

A. Do we have the capability -- the preplanned and unplanned options and the command, control and decision system -- to use our strategic forces to achieve U.S. military objectives in a slowly escalating strategic war of attrition? We need to examine whether our present posture is adequate to provide the President with the capability to use nuclear weapons in a selective manner during a nuclear crisis.

B. Under what circumstances would the United States use strategic nuclear weapons to respond to either a conventional or a nuclear attack on our Allies?

C. As far as the Chinese threat is concerned, are there further steps that we can and should take to assure countries that may feel threatened by China's nuclear capability that we will protect them?

D. What strategic capability is needed for the purpose of contributing to the deterrence of conventional war? What is its relationship to the required tactical nuclear and conventional forces? (These issues are being addressed in the second part of the NSSM-3 study.)

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